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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the educational orientations and concerns of African intellectuals in U.S. institutions of higher education, and assesses the relationship of such orientations to the perceptions of problems and processes of social change in African countries. Information was obtained from all students from Ethiopia, Kenya, Ghana, and Nigeria attending Pacific Coast institutions. The results of the survey indicated that more than half of the respondents favored educational change in the African countries. Forty-eight percent of the pro-change group favored the establishment of indigenous universities, because they believed that those institutions represented the formula for resolving the problems of contemporary African nations. Only 8 percent favored the stable continuity of the existing colleges and universities. Those who tended to see economic development, educational needs, tribalism, and national unity as very serious problems confronting their society favored educational change, while those who did not take these problems as very serious tended to support the status quo. In addition, the large majority of those who favored "Africanization" of higher education were in favor of educational change and wanted the creation of indigenous institutions. Though most students were concerned with scholarship, those who did not favor educational change were far more concerned than those who did. (AF)

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Intellect and Commitment: A Potential for Educational Change in the New Nations

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In recent years there has been a growing body of literature dealing with education and social change in the developing nations of Africa. Many African leaders, educational planners and concerned individuals who face the future of Africa are seeking to estimate the major forms and the speed of social and educational change on the continent. However, in spite of the fact that African intellectuals have been one of the most effective groups of individuals for promoting the changes in Africa, there have been virtually no studies which attempt to investigate how the future African intellectuals at home and abroad perceive the present role of higher education and its contribution to nation-building in Africa, nor to what extent they are sensitive or responsive to the problems in their home countries.

African university students at home and abroad constitute the most articulate group, and potentially the future corps in their respective countries, to whom leadership roles and decision-making on national policies will eventually pass. Thus the direction of future social and educational change in Africa will be very much affected by their support or opposition to the existing social and educational systems in their countries, and by their conception of and belief in the "appropriate" roles of the various institutions in their nations.

The purpose of this research project is to investigate the educational orientations and concerns of African intellectuals in the U.S. institutions of higher education, and to assess the relationship of such orientations to the perceptions of problems and processes of social change in African countries. More specifically, the objectives are the following:

I. To identify what the African students consider to be the major problems facing their countries.

II. To identify orientations of students, those

a. who subscribe to a stable continuity (no change) of the existing colleges and universities in the African countries.

b. who definitely subscribe to changes in the educational system.

c. who do not point to any specific condition, that is, either of the above (a or b).

III. To discover

a. how the different orientations of the sample relate to demographic factors, educational conceptions and selected attitudes.

The data for this study are provided by a survey of a population of African students in the Pacific Coast institutions. This survey involved the gathering of information from all the students from the countries of Ethiopia, Kenya, Ghana and Nigeria. The study was confined to English-speaking African countries south of the Sahara with more than 300 students in the United States.

Results of the Study:

Three major orientations of the sample were identified:

1. That which subscribes to a stable continuity (no change) of the present organization and function of higher education in the African countries.
2. That which subscribes to changes in the educational system--pro-change.
3. That which subscribes to change and favors indigenous educational institutions as the alternative to the existing colleges.

More than half of the respondents favor educational change in the African countries. Forty-eight percent of the "pro-change" group favor the institution of indigenous universities in the African countries because they believe that indigenous institutions represent the formula for resolving the problems of contemporary African nations. Only a small minority (8.0%) of the sample favor the stable continuity of the existing colleges and universities in the African countries.

Correlates of Education Orientations

The initial problem of this study was to investigate the association (if any) between the respondents' perceptions of African national problems and their educational orientations. To begin with, the prospective African elites who perceive economic development, educational needs, tribalism and national unity as very serious problems confronting their countries are more likely than those who perceive these problems as less serious, to subscribe to educational change in the African countries. For example, more than three-fourths of the respondents who indicated that educational needs in African countries is a very serious problem were for educational change in their countries and favored the creation of indigenous African universities, while only 10 percent of this group--those who perceive educational needs as a very serious problem--favored the stable continuity of the existing colleges and universities in their countries.

Economic development is considered by many people, including Africans and foreigners, as a very serious and probably the most serious problem confronting the new nations today. A relationship was found between the perception of economic development as a very serious problem

and educational orientations. A large proportion (74%) of the respondents who agreed that economic development is a very serious problem in their countries were those whose orientations were found to subscribe to educational change and favor the institution of African indigenous universities in their countries, while only six percent of the students who endorsed economic development as a very serious problem in their countries favored the stability of their existing higher education.

On all the problems identified by the sample as major ones facing their countries (economic development, tribalism, national unity and leadership, political development, educational needs and living conditions in the countries), the respondents with different orientations differ remarkably in their perceptions of the degree of seriousness of their national problems. The respondents who consider the various problems as very serious tend to be the advocates of indigenous universities for their countries, while those who consider their national problems as not very serious tend to support the status quo. As already pointed out, the intellectuals in developing countries are the professional elites and experts who are now searching for alternative and new means for resolving their countries' problems and for bringing about needed societal changes. The findings of this investigation suggest that the students' perceptions of the seriousness of problems facing their countries may serve to instigate them to search for alternative educational arrangements for their countries.

One major objective of this study was to identify the principal "educational conceptions" of the students in this sample which may further account for their different orientations. In order to achieve this, a principal components analysis with varimax rotation was performed on

fifteen Likert-type items designed to elicit information on educational conceptions.[1] Two factors (conceptions) were identified through this analysis. The loadings of the items on the two factors suggested that they might be labeled "Africanization" and "general education" factor respectively, to convey the general tone of the items loading heavily on the factors.

In order to learn more about the characteristics of the students who favor "Africanization" of college and university programs in the African countries as contrasted with those who do not favor "Africanization," the three leading items on the factor were combined into a single index of "Africanization." Individuals were scored according to their responses to the items using a standard technique of factor scoring.[2] The entire sample was trichotomized into high, middle and low scoring groups. The same procedure was used to categorize the sample into high, middle and low scoring groups on "general education."

First, let us consider the educational orientations of African students who scored high on "Africanization." In keeping with their conception of higher education in Africa, a large proportion (74.0%) of the group most in favor of "Africanization" support educational change in the African countries, while only thirty-five percent of the low scoring group favor educational change in their countries. The "high-Africanization" group is more in favor of the creation of an indigenous African university in their country than the low group. More than three-

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[1] Harry H. Harman, Modern Factor Analysis (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), pp. 301-308.

[2] Ibid., pp. 337-338.

fourths of the respondents who scored high on "Africanization" agreed that "an indigenous African university, as contrasted to those resulting from foreign efforts represents the formula for resolving African problems." A somewhat smaller proportion (56.5%) of those who scored low on this conception agreed that an indigenous African university is the appropriate institution for resolving African problems.

The results of the data corroborate an anticipated relationship between educational orientations and conception. However, there was no statistical evidence from the data that the conception--"general education"--is associated with orientations, although the group most in favor of general education tends slightly to favor educational change in the African countries more than those who scored low on this conception.

Most African students feel that universities in Africa should be concerned with scholarship, but those who do not favor educational change in the African countries are far more concerned with scholarship than those who favor change. Thirty percent of the "anti-change" group said that "an African college or university should be concerned with scholarship--not the solution of practical problems," while only seven percent of the pro-change group endorsed this idea. In keeping with their concern for the practical problems of Africa, a large proportion (76.0%) of the pro-change group were in favor of lowering the admission requirements of higher educational institutions in their countries to admit more students for advanced and practical technical training. Only 20 percent of the anti-change group agreed to changes in university admission requirements for this purpose. Several other variables--nationality, length of stay in the U.S., academic status, field of study and age--which seemed to

be indicative of educational orientations were examined. None of them proved to be statistically significant. However, in relating field of study to educational orientation, it was found that the social scientists tend slightly to be more "pro-educational change" than the engineers, agriculturists and the business majors.